

LES VOYAGEURS '69

IMPROVEMENTS TO BASE CAMP:

The large log cabin has not been worked on for a year. It appears that the floor is not strong enough to support the weight of the walls. It could possibly be used as we have for the past three summers as the main staff tent platform with the walls cut down to 2 or 3 feet.

A small log cabin was erected on base camp and has accommodation for 2 people to sleep comfortably, fireplace, etc. It will need to be properly roofed for use next summer and I would suggest that a number of rolls of tarpaper be purchased for this - cabin is about 15' x 15'.

A new steam bath was completed - capacity 6 people (140° F)

New garbage pit was dug - needs to be roofed over to prevent people falling in - 12 feet deep.

The supply sled has been completed and is screened enough except for mice and squirrels.

Other than the usual maintenance jobs base camp did not consume the energy of past summers - a possible reflection of our philosophical shift from active involvement to meditative detachment.

The campsites about the lake did not change materially - as they now are in the state necessary to support our style of camping. Damaged and dying trees from previous years may become a safety problem - particularly during heavy storms - possibly a thought should be given to clearing those off around the sites.

It should be noted that construction of a cabin has begun on one of the islands down the lake and mining claims were restaked in the base camp area. A good look should be taken at steps necessary to lease the property before we lose it by default.

Tourists both American and friendly were a pain in the . . . Fire arms were discharged at all hours and there was some concern for safety. I think we may have to be prepared to bring in the Lands and Forests if this develops into a regular group of visitors - standard practice this summer was to shoot at seagulls with 303 and shoot anything in the bush that suggested bear. We did not maintain the good old YMCA spirit of understanding between peoples of different viewpoints on this subject.

TENTS:

Two new tents 12 x 14 and three new flies were purchased for the summer as well as four Bark Lake 3 man tents. Because two crews chose to use the Bark Lake tents extensively on their trips we were able to make use of old sail silk tents for base camp living and left the two large tents unused. The Bark Lakes appeared to be satisfactory once they were made waterproof and eased somewhat the weight and size problems of the larger tents (particularly during wet spells).

A possible 4 more should be bought to allow the other crews the option of using the large or smaller tent. There did not seem to be any splitting of crews because of the sleeping arrangements.

Staff (base camp) tent and flies were parafined during the summer and should be good for another summer. The idea of plastic flies for the kitchen area could be looked into.

Camp needs a flag (a large one) - we are Canadians operating in a country infested with American fishermen.

CANOES:

Reasonable care seems to have become more evident this year through insistence.

One canoe was damaged in the bow - but as this was also an area of dry rot it was to be somewhat expected.

Two new 16 or 17 feet (a pair) should be bought to replace the two oldest canoes in the fleet. Although we have a full compliment I do think a systematic rotation of equipment is the only way to prevent a suddenly decayed list of equipment. Might look into the canoe builder at Lesage \$160. for 16 feet versus \$235. from Chestnut.

PADDLES:

The practice of having the campers purchase their own paddles should be continued - it eliminated a headache for us; seemed to create a value on good paddles and allowed the boys an opportunity to decorate their own before coming up to camp.

STEAMER TRUNKS:

The use of these trunks really helped out in keeping the boys equipment left in base camp in reasonable shape.

OUTBOARD MOTOR:

Will need to be overhauled and a new starter installed - other wise very satisfactory.

TRUCK:

The bonnet needs to be welded and the right front wheel is out of alignment. Possibly could be pushed for another year's service. No mechanical problems all summer. Needs a new right front tire.

ALUMINUM BOAT:

The flotation tanks under the seats need to be bolted back into place - otherwise OK - could be painted for esthetic reasons.

PACK SACKS:

Nine brand new unused from this summer - a half dozen should be ordered (same make) for next summer as many of the scrap ones were given their last portage this summer.

COOK KITS:

Although the cheap aluminum ones service for a summer it might be worth the cost for the old U.S. Marine 9 man kits. It would appear we balance out our costs with the two kinds, one the pots are smashed - the other they are eventually lost.

First aid kits need a little more thought for cold treatment - vitamin pills?

FOOD:

Seems to be adequate - though still too starchy and mushy. There is a fair amount of Freeze Dry vegetables left from this summer and a look should be taken of the inventory before ordering.

We need a breakfast orange juice (real not flavoured crystals).

Food bought in bulk seems to work once the base camp staff has been trained. A good supply of plastic bags (5 lb.) is needed as well as cloth food bags.

Although the new director will have his own preferences, I think our food order for this summer was just about right for two full camps.

Freeze Dry chicken was not worth the extra expense - possibly should confine ourselves to Freeze Dry beef as it is versatile.

STAFF TRAINING:

First aid course should become a regular part of the pre-pre-camp stay at Kanawana and should be at least an afternoon session so that as much can be covered in depth as possible. The session this summer did help very much to make staff aware of problems they may have encountered on the trail- it also gave a sober note to the responsibility the tripper has to bear.

I think the staff should be responsible for painting and repairing the canoes and tents before camp as they seemed to appreciate the effort needed to repair damage and therefore took a little more care of the equipment.

I think the staff needs to be indoctrinated a little more completely on why Les Voyageurs tides the way it does. I found that there was some confusion of the aims of such a program which was in some ways reflected by the style of trips taken. However, the type of person working at Voyageurs has to think "the Voyageur style" before even being hired as I don't think our program can be expected by someone who just has the appropriate skills.

I do not know the plans of last summer's staff for the coming year but I suggest you start looking soon as I do not think we can comment on too many returning. I will not be available and can offer no positive suggestions for a replacement.

We took a pre-camp trip for 2 days but other than being pleasant and helping to mould the crew didn't accomplish anything which wasn't already known.

The summer has been the best of the three I have spent at La Verendrye - possibly because of the familiarity with the situation - but also because of the people on the job. I think the majority of the boys achieved most of their goals plus many they never knew existed.

Somehow the camp has to be advertised so that we can fill it and make it work both financially and physically - it does work from a philosophical point of view and is well worth the effort.

The staff did their job and then some. Things ran very smoothly and with a minimum of friction. I only wish we could do something to help relieve the pressure they work under without relief for 3 and 4 weeks.

It was a good summer.

David Blake,
Director,
Les Voyageurs de la Verendrye.